



Republican Policy Committee

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Work And Opportunity — Congress Delivers Real Welfare Reform

This Congress: “Ending Welfare As We Know It”

The lessons of history, confirmed by the evidence immediately before me, show conclusively that continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber. To dole out relief in this way is to administer a narcotic, a subtle destroyer of the human spirit. It is inimicable to the dictates of sound policy. It is a violation of the traditions of America.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Second Annual Message
January 4, 1935

Sixty years later, the evidence immediately before us confirms President Roosevelt’s dark warning against “continued dependence” on welfare. The current welfare system, rather than encouraging self-sufficiency, actually long has been discouraging it.

Welfare As We Know It

The goal of any successful welfare program must be self-sufficiency. Yet, the three pillars of personal success — family unity, educational achievement, and a strong work ethic — simply are not the focus of the current federal welfare system.

In fact, rather than discouraging out of wedlock births, the current system provides unmarried mothers a financial incentive never to marry. Rather than requiring teens to finish their educations, the current system allows them to drop out of school and leave home to begin a life of welfare dependence. And, rather than requiring able-bodied adults to find jobs or at least work for their benefits, the current system guarantees that they receive a check even if they refuse to work. The result:

- ▶ Some 50 percent of all unwed teenage mothers go on welfare within one year of the birth of their first child and 77 percent within five years, while children born out of wedlock are themselves three times more likely to be on welfare as adults.
- ▶ Children raised in families dependent on welfare are two to three times more likely to drop out and fail to graduate from high school

- ▶ Of the nearly 5 million families on welfare, the average length of stay is 13 years, while less than 7 percent of welfare recipients actually work for their benefits.

Ending Welfare As We Know It

The Congress is about to send President Clinton (for the third time) welfare reform legislation that builds on the legislation crafted by former Majority Leader Dole, Representative Shaw, and others: it **ends** welfare as we know it. The bill is based on the simple proposition that self-sufficiency requires personal responsibility. Fathers are required to support their children; teens are required to stay at home and stay in school, and the able-bodied are required to work. Specifically, the bill:

Ensures Personal Responsibility

- ▶ Requires welfare recipients to work within two years of receiving benefits;
- ▶ Imposes a 5-year lifetime limit on welfare benefits, with an exemption for hardship cases;
- ▶ Requires that states reduce cash benefits of individuals who refuse to show up for work;
- ▶ Requires teen mothers to stay in school and at home to continue receiving benefits;
- ▶ Requires dead-beat dads to pay child support; and
- ▶ Requires that welfare applicants assist in establishing the paternity of their children in order to qualify for full benefits.

Ends Fraud and Abuse

- ▶ Bars illegal aliens from receiving welfare;
- ▶ Enforces current law by requiring immigrant sponsors to guarantee, by pledging their own income, that those they sponsor do not end up on welfare; and
- ▶ Bars convicted felons from receiving welfare while in prison.

Gives States Resources and Flexibility

- ▶ Provides an additional \$4.5 billion (a total of \$22 billion) to help states provide child care for parents participating in work and job training programs;
- ▶ Provides additional grants to states that experience high unemployment or surges in their welfare population;
- ▶ Sets aside funding for states to establish abstinence education programs;
- ▶ Provides bonuses to states that succeed at reducing the number of out-of-wedlock births without increasing the number of abortions
- ▶ Ends the guaranteed federal entitlement to welfare and replaces it with a block grant to states that allows them to design programs that work best for them; and
- ▶ Reduces by 75 percent the number of federal bureaucrats who run the current system.

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